

Dear Parents,

Within the next few weeks, your child will be taking the South Dakota State Test of Educational Progress or *Dakota STEP*. The *Dakota STEP* is the assessment system for accountability in South Dakota schools that assesses basic curricular objectives in reading, mathematics at grades 3 through 8 and 11, and Science at grades 5, 8 and 11.

The foundation of the Dakota STEP is the *Stanford Achievement Test Series, Tenth Edition*. Additional test questions are used to assess the South Dakota State Content Standards in reading and mathematics as required by the *No Child Left Behind Act*. The *Dakota STEP* provides updated content that reflects national and state standards, curriculum, and educational trends for the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The *Dakota STEP* is given to students in grades 3 through 8 and 11 in the spring of the school year (April 2-20, 2007). The test provides information on your child's performance in various content areas. The results help teachers to plan lessons that build upon what your child already knows and to encourage progress in areas your child has not yet mastered.

This type of test can only give certain kinds of information about how your child is doing in school. To get a more complete picture, you also need to know how your child performs on other tests the teacher gives, daily class work, homework, and other activities. The attached chart lists some suggestions that both you and your child can do to help prepare him or her to take the *Dakota STEP* and other tests.

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR CHILD TO TAKE A TEST

Here are some things your child can do:

REST

Get a good night's sleep before the test.

EAT

Eat a good breakfast.

LISTEN

Listen carefully to the directions that are given for the test and follow them exactly. If the directions are not clear, ask the teacher to repeat them or to explain them.

TRY

Do your best and do not give up.

Here are some things you can do:

DISCUSS

Help your child understand that The *Dakota STEP* gives him or her a chance to show what a he or she knows about a subject

SUPPORT

Ask your child to maintain regular study habits. Do not ask your child to give extra study time for the *Dakota STEP*. The test covers more schoolwork than your child can learn in a few extra hours.

RELAX

Students who are calm and sure of themselves do better on tests.